

The background of the cover is a light beige color with a complex pattern of white technical drawings. These drawings include various gears of different sizes, some with teeth, and several circular diagrams with internal lines and arrows. The drawings are scattered across the entire page, creating a sense of mechanical complexity and precision.

ADDICTED TO BUSY:

**YOUR BLUEPRINT FOR
BURNOUT PREVENTION**



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ADDICTED TO BUSY:
your blueprint for burnout prevention

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what's driving the addiction to busy?

"We are a culture of people who've bought into the idea that if we stay busy enough, the truth of our lives won't catch up with us."

- DR. BRENÉ BROWN

Busy has become a badge of honor and a glorified cult in our culture, particularly at work. Busyness is equated with having intrinsic worth and value, and if you're busy, that means your life has meaning and you have a hedge against emptiness and loneliness, right? Being busy isn't a bad thing as long as it's purposeful and intentional, but too many of us fill our lives with unessential tasks in order to feel important and responsible. Now that I work with busy professionals to help them prevent burning out, I see "Addicted to Busy" as an undercurrent in many of the stories I hear.

For many years, my worth was tied to my career title – who was I if I wasn't a lawyer? I had to wrestle with that question when I left my law practice and started a new business doing something completely different. My busyness covered up a whole lot of stuff in my life that I didn't want to face.

This e-book explores the factors driving the Addicted to Busy culture and provides solutions to the resulting burnout and unhappiness. On these pages, you'll find research-based strategies to help you prevent burnout, lessen the grip of perfection, clear your mental clutter and so much more.

What Drives Addicted to Busy?

These 6 factors highly influence the Addicted to Busy culture (Schulte, 2014; Spira, 2011):

1. **INFORMATION OVERLOAD** – we have too much information coming at us, which leads to #2...
2. **DISTRACTION AND DISCONNECTION** – we work on fragmented time. Information workers have so much coming at them they switch tasks every 3 minutes; and, for every interruption it takes 10-20 times the amount of the interruption time to return to the original task. That adds up to a lot of wasted time and productivity during the day. For a great video on this topic, check out "Look Up" on You Tube.

3. **THE IDEAL WORKER STANDARD** – the workplace still imagines the ideal worker as being tied to his/her job and working endless hours, even if it costs him or her health, family, and especially, free time.
4. **INTENSE PARENTING** – our culture has set such an insanely high standard for parents today, in particular, mothers. Parents, fueled by fear and guilt, rarely feel like they're doing or being enough.
5. **ALL...THE...RUSHING...AROUND** – I actually feel anxiety when my friends describe all of the activities they have their kids in and all of the rushing around they do each day.
6. **THE CHOICES YOU MAKE ABOUT HOW YOU SPEND YOUR TIME.** In addition to the outside influences, Addicted to Busy is also about how you choose to spend your time. The messages you grew up with around achievement, success, busyness and more influence how you choose to spend your time today. **Having said that, if you're the parent of small kids, caring for aging relatives, a single parent, or holding down multiple jobs to make ends meet, I'm not talking about you – you're truly *busy*.

when addicted to busy becomes burned out

The Burnout Problem...

Research shows that various components of time urgency (eating behavior, speech patterns, competitiveness, task-related hurry, and general hurry) are significantly associated with burnout (Conte et. al, 2001).

Professionals who are burned out also report problems with being attentive. One study showed that people who are burned out have difficulty with actively controlling their attention spans and that the level of difficulty depends on the severity of the burnout symptoms (Van Der Linden et al., 2005). This has implications for numerous professionals whose jobs involve high concentration, attention to detail, and patient safety (e.g., nurses, doctors, lawyers, pilots, and scientists).

Burnout is pervasive – here are just some of the statistics regarding burnout and its impact:

- ** Approximately 70% of American workers feel disengaged on some level
- ** Worldwide, that number increases to 87%
- ** 1 in 3 doctors feel burned out at any given time
- ** 96% of senior leaders report feeling burned out to some degree; 1/3 describe their burnout as extreme
- ** 60% of healthcare workers say they are burned out
- ** Among IT professionals, 81% of entry level to mid-level and 65% of senior-level survey respondents said that stress on the job is causing them to check out other job opportunities
- ** Burnout has been found to explain, in part, turnover in the nursing profession

This merely scratches the surface of all of the articles, surveys, and research papers that exist on this topic, and this evidence inspired me to do something about the problem. For more information about burnout, please visit my website at www.pauladavislaack.com or my blogs on *Psychology Today* www.psychologytoday.com/blog/pressure-proof and *Huffington Post* www.huffingtonpost.com/paula-davislaack.

My Burnout Story...

I have always been achievement oriented, competitive, and driven (the “Power Trio”). I vividly recall, as a little 5 year old, cheering wildly while running around the bases in T-ball when Jamie Ditzenberger hit a home run to win our game. That was back when teams actually kept score. That wiring is part of who I am, and quite frankly, I don’t want to change it. The Power Trio has accounted for much of my success, but they also contributed to my burnout.

In high school I began getting panic attacks because of the intense pressure I placed on myself to excel in my classes and extracurricular activities. I come from a small town, and I am the first person on my dad’s side of the family and the second person on my mom’s side of the family to graduate with a college degree. My teachers and my family expected me to do great things in life. While I don’t think I’ve disappointed them, I never stopped to think about what I really wanted my career to look like. So, without much rhyme or reason, I went to law school.

Once my career as a commercial real estate lawyer started, the Power Trio re-emerged and my life became about work, my relationships suffered and my self-care was non-existent. I prided myself in only taking long weekend vacations for three years (so stupid) because I didn’t want to have to come back to work only to find a big tank of billable hours to fill. After I left my law firm to practice in-house for a company, the punishing schedule there to complete real estate deals combined with years of not managing the Power Trio caught up with me.

During the last year of my law practice, I was frequently sick, my body crashing every time the adrenaline wore off after a real estate deal closed. I was exhausted in a way I had never experienced – I almost fell asleep standing in the street while walking my dog. I was cranky and cynical, even by lawyer standards, and stopped wanting to be around people and have them demand so much of my time (not a good look when your job is to deal with people’s legal problems). And my panic attacks returned in full force. I would have them at least weekly, and several of them sent me bolting from my office directly to the doctor because I thought my body was literally spinning out of control. I visited the emergency room three times because of crazy digestive aches and pains that felt like someone was stabbing me in the stomach.

An enormous weight was lifted off of my shoulders when I left my law practice on June 24, 2009, but I soon discovered that the end was just the beginning. I had to have some tough conversations with myself. I had to figure out why I started getting panic attacks at the age of 14, and why they came back. I had to figure out why I thought it was more impressive to become a lawyer instead of following my heart to become a writer or something else. I had to dig deep to uncover why I let the Power Trio get out of control. I had to reconnect with my values. Getting real with yourself isn’t always pretty (which is probably why you’re avoiding it), but true happiness and burnout prevention and recovery

depend on it.

Burnout Defined...

Burnout is a disease of disengagement. It's a chronic process of unplugging and disconnecting from work, friends, family, and health. The most important part of this definition is the word "chronic." Burnout doesn't just spring up overnight – it simmers over a period of time.

The 3 Dimensions of Burnout...

Burnout researchers, Drs. Christina Maslach and Paul Leiter, have identified three distinct dimensions of burnout:

EXHAUSTION: Feeling emotionally exhausted, depleted, and a loss of energy.

CYNICISM: Having a negative attitude toward clients and those you work with, feeling irritable, and withdrawing from people and activities you once enjoyed.

INEFFICACY: Experiencing diminished personal accomplishment, a perceived decline in competence or productivity, and expending energy at work without seeing any results.

- TAKE AN ASSESSMENT – These dimensions can be measured very easily and quickly with an assessment called the MBI-GS (Maslach Burnout Inventory – General Survey). Your results will give you a good starting point for where you stand on the burnout continuum. If you'd like to take this assessment, please contact me directly at paula@pauladavislaack.com.

Causes of Burnout...

Even though burnout can happen in other life domains, much of the burnout research focuses on burnout at work. Workplace culture is part of the burnout problem. Burnout at work is caused by the following 3 factors (Bakker, Demerouti, & Euwema, 2005) and (Demerouti, et. al, 2009), with specific examples in the chart below:

1. Too many Job Demands (aspects of your job that require sustained effort and energy);
2. Too few Job Resources (aspects of your job that (a) help you achieve job goals; (b) reduce the cost of Job Demands; and (c) stimulate growth and learning); and
3. Too little Recovery (the breaks you take at work, after work each night, on the weekends, and on vacation).

In addition to specific workplace causes, burnout is also caused by your “wiring”- the different personality traits and thoughts/beliefs that you bring to the table. Beliefs about what it means to succeed, what it means to achieve, what you think a good _____ (insert your profession here) looks like, and more play a role in whether you are susceptible to burnout (Alarcon, Eschleman, & Bowling, 2009).

Here are examples of different Job Demands and Job Resources that researchers have examined (Bakker, A.B., Demerouti, E., & Sanz-Vergel, 2014) (Leiter & Maslach, 2005):

JOB DEMANDS	JOB RESOURCES
High work pressure & workload	High-quality relationships with colleagues
Emotionally demanding interactions with colleagues and clients	Decision authority
Lack of autonomy	Feedback
Role conflict & role ambiguity	Time and job control (autonomy)
Lack of high-quality connections	Opportunities to learn new things
Values conflict	Leader support
Unfairness	
** For nurses, add patient aggression & violence and exposure to traumatic events	

Burnout Warning Signs...

Doctors and therapists can easily miss burnout warning signs because they tend to look like symptoms of other illnesses. I had lots of digestive issues and dozens of tests to check for irritable bowel syndrome, Crohn’s disease, and ulcers, all of which turned out negative. That’s because the root cause or driver of my digestive unrest was being ignored – chronic stress and burnout.

In addition, burnout is a “gateway illness” because it opens the door to other things like depression, anxiety, panic attacks and more. If a health professional only treats the depression or panic attacks, the burnout remains and you won’t necessarily feel better.

These are just some of the warning signs of burnout:

PHYSICAL: frequent headaches, getting sick more often than usual, exhaustion, stomach and digestive issues, restless, can’t sleep, heart palpitations, chest pain

PSYCHOLOGICAL: Panic attacks, increasing feelings of anger, frustration and irritability, feeling hopeless, helpless, and pessimistic, loss of enjoyment for activities you once loved

BEHAVIORAL: Drop in productivity, increased absenteeism, isolation – wanting to eat lunch alone or just be alone, becoming a poor team player, increased alcohol/drug use

If you think you may be burned out, make sure to mention chronic stress and burnout specifically to your doctor or healthcare provider. Well-intentioned healthcare providers often overlook the importance that chronic stress plays in our health, and doctors and therapists may not be well versed in the symptomology of burnout.

Help is on the Way...

If you are burned out or want to prevent burnout from happening or recurring, help is here! There are research-based skills that can help, all of which are detailed in “Your Blueprint for Burnout Prevention” on the next page.

your blueprint for burnout prevention

Your Blueprint for Burnout Prevention is a combination of strategies and techniques that (a) attack the specific dimensions of burnout (exhaustion, cynicism and inefficacy) and (b) have helped me and countless others I have worked with recover from burnout, prevent it from recurring, or prevent it from happening in the first place.

On the following pages, each of the 6 Blueprint components is explained and different exercises, self-coaching strategies, and techniques are included for you to try. My hope is that you choose the strategies that resonate most with you so that you can incorporate the Blueprint components into your own life.

There are additional free worksheets on my website right now, and I will be adding more free exercises in the coming months, so please be sure to check in at <http://pauladavislaack.com/products/freebies/>.

manage your energy, not your time	<ul style="list-style-type: none">· create recovery rituals· know your 6 sources of thriving
clear the mental clutter	<ul style="list-style-type: none">· know how you explain success and adversity· ID the mindsets that undercut your happiness and success
let go of perfection	<ul style="list-style-type: none">· build shame resilience· stop being a maximizer
stay “plugged in”	<ul style="list-style-type: none">· change your job without leaving your job· outsource your inspiration
develop authenticity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">· ignore the critics in the cheap seats· ID the happiness myths you buy into
believe that you can produce results	<ul style="list-style-type: none">· develop self-efficacy· cultivate hope

manage your energy, not your time

If you are Addicted to Busy, then this is the #1 strategy for you to get back more time in your day. Why? Time is a fixed commodity and there will always be only 24 hours in a day. In addition to helping you be more productive, managing your energy is an effective way to prevent burnout because a main driver of burnout is exhaustion.

Neuroscientists, performance psychologists and others recommend taking some kind of break every 90-120 minutes during the day (Loehr & Schwartz, 2003; Levitin, 2014). If you're like many of the folks I work with, then I suspect you're not taking breaks this frequently.

I have had a number of coaching clients push back hard when I ask them to do what I'm going to ask you to do – create Recovery Rituals. “But Paula, I *caaan't* do *that* because if I take a break now, then I'll have to make up the time later.” While I understand the response, it's not supported by science. When you give yourself a chance to recover, you actually become more productive and you spend far less time being distracted, checking the Internet, wandering around your office, paying your bills, or doing whatever else you would be doing because you're more focused.

When the magazine *Fast Company* asked successful professionals to talk about the ways in which they avoided burnout, despite hectic workloads and fast paced, high-level careers, almost all of them talked about the recovery rituals they used to make sure they regularly renewed themselves (Loehr & Schwartz, 2003).

Unfortunately, we live and work in a world that does not value rest, relaxation, recovery and leisure. Think about the messages you received growing up around taking a break and relaxing. When I worked at my parent's factory, I sat down at the end of my shift and my well-intentioned dad found me sitting and handed me a broom. “There's always more work to be done,” he said. These types of messages stick and inform the way you think about rest and recovery as you get older.

SKILL: CREATE YOUR RECOVERY RITUALS

Here are 3 tips to boost your success at turning your Recovery Rituals into habits:

1. Your Recovery Ritual doesn't have to be long – it just has to be something you will do with regularity. Effective breaks during the day can be short, like 5-10 minutes. If your Recovery Ritual is exercising more, then that ritual will likely be longer.

2. Use “if...then” phrasing with your Recovery Rituals. Research has shown that if you add “if...then” statements to your goals, the likelihood of achieving that goal skyrockets (Halvorson, 2011). This is how I use “if...then” statements with one of my Recovery Rituals, which is exercising most days of the week: “If it’s Monday morning, then I’m going to the gym.” That becomes a habit, which puts my brain on autopilot. If it’s cold outside, I’m tired, or just don’t feel like going, it doesn’t matter because it’s Monday morning, and Monday morning = gym. Another example might be: “If it’s 10am, then I’m going to listen to two songs on my iPod.”
3. Ground your Recovery Ritual in something meaningful. Why are you doing this Recovery Ritual? If you’re doing it because I told you to, then you’re probably not going to stick with it. Finding the motivation when it matters is called your “I Want” power, a phrase coined by Stanford health psychologist, Kelly McGonigal. When you’re facing temptation or procrastination, you need to be able to tap into your motivation. Whether it’s bettering your health, having more financial freedom, or fitting into your skinny jeans, you have to find motivation when your willpower is running low.

Here’s a little worksheet to get you started.

Recovery Ritual Worksheet

MY RECOVERY RITUAL IS: _____

What’s getting in the way of incorporating this Recovery Ritual into your day or week? Turn your Recovery Ritual into an “If....Then” statement.

How can you remove those obstacles?

What is your motivation? (e.g., more health; more productivity; less stress; more time with my significant other, etc.)

When will you perform your Recovery Ritual? How?

SKILL: KNOW YOUR 6 SOURCES OF THRIVING

(Worksheet on the next page)

People who are thriving and flourishing get enough of each of these six sources of energy. The six sources are (1) Positive emotions; (2) Engagement (feeling “plugged into” what you’re doing); (3) Relationships; (4) Meaning; (5) Achievement; and (6) Health. Pretend you have 30 points to allocate to each of these “buckets.” What does your ideal equation look like? What does your equation look like today? How can you close the gap?

your 6 sources of thriving

POSITIVE EMOTION: What positive emotions do you love to feel? What activities facilitate those emotions?

ENGAGEMENT: What activities cause you to lose track of time and make you feel like you're "in the zone?"

RELATIONSHIPS: Who are "your people?" Who **MUST** you spend time with in order to feel energized?

MEANING: What contributes to your sense of meaning and purpose?

ACHIEVEMENT: What types of activities drive you? What does achievement look like for you?

HEALTH: Burnout prevention requires self-care. How do you recover throughout the day? After work? On the weekends? On vacation? Do you have limiting beliefs that are holding you back from taking a break (e.g., "It's a sign of laziness/weakness to relax.")

(Adapted from Flourish by Dr. Martin E.P. Seligman)

clear the mental clutter

I cannot emphasize enough (a) how much mental clutter keeps you tethered to being too busy, and (b) the role psychological resilience plays in burnout prevention and recovery. Burnout researchers define engagement as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized, in part, by vigor (having high levels of energy and mental resilience). Decades of research in the area of cognitive psychology reveal that your thinking style is the main driver in how you feel about a stressful event and how you react to it. Learning how to identify counterproductive thinking will help you manage the stress that comes your way, and being able to handle stress effectively will help you alleviate burnout and take back more control over your day.

Your goal is to become a FAT thinker – flexible, accurate, and thorough. When people learn to evaluate their thinking in a FAT way, they experience improvement in their emotional state and in their behavior (Beck, 2011).

SKILL: KNOW HOW YOU EXPLAIN SUCCESS AND ADVERSITY

The way you interpret success and failure has a big impact on how well you manage stress, perform under pressure, and succeed. People who explain their success and failure in an optimistic way (called optimistic thinkers) do much better in life. When compared to pessimistic thinkers, optimistic thinkers:

- ** Get sick less often and if sick, recover quicker
- ** Live longer (on average, 8 ½ - 9 years longer)
- ** Are happier and less depressed

Not too shabby for a thinking style, right!

This chart explains how optimistic thinkers think about success and adversity (Seligman, 1990):

	SCOPE	DURATION	CONTROL
SUCCESS	This good thing is going to impact lots of areas of my life	This good thing is going to be around for awhile	I made this good thing happen
ADVERSITY	I'm going to compartmentalize so that this adversity doesn't impact lots of areas of my life	Bummer, this adversity might be around for awhile ("embrace the suck") but it will be over at some point	Where do I have control, influence, or leverage in this situation? Where are my solution points?

This chart explains how pessimistic thinkers think about success and adversity (Seligman, 1990):

	SCOPE	DURATION	CONTROL
SUCCESS	This good thing isn't going to impact my life much	It's going to be around for a short period of time	I didn't do much to bring about this good thing; it was luck
ADVERSITY	It's going to impact lots of areas of my life	This adversity is going to be around for a long time, possibly forever	I'm not seeing where I have any control, influence or leverage; I'm getting stuck

If the pessimistic thinker chart sounds like you, then pay attention to when your pessimistic thinking occurs – is it at work, at home, in certain situations, with certain people? Those patterns are important to detect. Once you identify your pessimistic thinking, pick one of the strategies below to reframe your thinking.

- TAKE AN ASSESSMENT - If you're interested in learning more, you can formally measure whether you're an optimistic or a pessimistic thinker at the University of Pennsylvania's research website, www.authentic happiness.org. Just look for the Optimism Test under the Questionnaires tab.

SKILL: IDENTIFY THE MINDSETS THAT KEEP YOU STUCK

Listed below are 10 of the most common limiting mindsets or strong beliefs that I hear from the folks I work with. Put a check mark next to the ones you tell yourself, and then, use one of the reframing strategies below to re-write those mindsets.

- What will people think of me?
- I have to be the good _____ (wife; daughter; accountant; friend)
- I should achieve more
- I have to be perfect
- I'm not _____ enough (good; thin; worthy; smart; athletic)
- I can handle it all on my own
- I'll pretend everything is OK

- I should put everyone else first (a.k.a. – I can't take time for myself)
- I have to be a people pleaser or "they" won't like me
- I can't be perceived as weak

Strategies to Re-Frame Pessimistic/Counterproductive Thinking (Beck, 2011)

EVIDENCE "What's the evidence for or against this thought?" (For example, if you think, "I'm not good enough," then what specific, measurable, data-driven evidence do you have for the fact that you aren't good enough? That you are good enough?)

IMPACT "What impact is this thought having in my life?" "What would be the result if I changed my thinking?" (For example, if you think, "I'm not good enough," what impact is that counterproductive thought having in your work/life? Is it causing you to avoid challenges that would otherwise advance your career or move you away from a healthy relationship?)

DISTANCE "What would I tell my friend/partner/child if he/she was in the same situation?" (For example, if you think, "I'm a terrible mom," is that something you would tell your best friend? We beat ourselves up in our own minds but wouldn't dare say the same thing to a friend, significant other or child.)

let go of perfection

Many of the high-achievers I coach are perfectionists or have perfectionistic tendencies. You might think that perfectionism is important to success, but it's likely the very thing leading you away from your true purpose, and it completely wipes out your energy in the process.

Women and girls, in particular, experience many societal messages about the importance of looking and being perfect. In addition, I have interviewed a number of people about their experiences with burnout, and perfectionism is a consistent theme in their stories.

According to research by Dr. Brene Brown, body image, caregiving, and parenting are three of the biggest perfectionism struggles people face:

Body Image

According to Brown, "Body shame is so powerful and often so deeply rooted in our psyches that it actually affects why and how we feel shame in many of the other categories, including sexuality, motherhood, parenting, health, aging, and a woman's ability to speak out with confidence."

Caregiving

Many of my friends and relatives are taking care of aging parents. My hat goes off to them because it is hard work. Because the Ideal Worker standard (which is one of the 6 drivers influencing Addicted to Busy) is still in place in many companies, workplaces haven't yet caught up to the fact that caregiving is one of the hardest jobs on the planet. Bosses still expect you to be at work on time, carry a full workload, and do your job with the same energy you would normally have, despite the fact that caring for an ill loved one drains so much of your physical, mental, and emotional energy.

Parenting

Intense parenting is one of the 6 drivers of Addicted to Busy, and women are in a perfectionism catch-22 when it comes to their decision about motherhood. Whether you're struggling with infertility, have decided not to have children, have purposefully delayed having children, have decided to have only one child, or have decided to have a large family, women just can't win. Many dads would also like to be spending more time with their kids, but the Ideal Worker standard doesn't allow for much flexibility.

SKILL: BUILD SHAME RESILIENCE

Brown defines shame as, “the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing that we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging.” Our shame tends to hide in one of these 12 categories (Brown, 2012):

- Appearance and body image
- Motherhood/fatherhood
- Parenting
- Addiction
- Aging
- Surviving trauma
- Money and work
- Family
- Mental and physical health
- Sex
- Religion
- Being stereotyped or labeled

Put a check mark by each of your “shame categories.” For me, my shame tends to appear with appearance and body image and to a lesser extent, money and work. This latter one has popped up recently as I continue to grow my business while many of my law school classmates are advancing in their careers.

The way out is to build shame resilience, which has the following four components (Brown, 2012):

1. **RECOGNIZE YOUR SHAME TRIGGERS** – for example, you think, “I can’t be perceived as unable to manage it all;” or, “Good mothers don’t put their kids in daycare;”
2. **PRACTICE CRITICAL AWARENESS** – acknowledge and filter all of the messages and beliefs that block your way (use one of the Think It Through Again strategies to help you re-frame counterproductive thinking);
3. **REACH OUT** – find the people in your circle who will offer empathy and support around these issues; and
4. **SPEAK SHAME** – talk about how you feel and ask for what you need.

SKILL: STOP BEING A MAXIMIZER

People who strive to make perfect decisions are called “maximizers.” This term was coined by researcher Barry Schwartz to explain the overwhelm people can feel when they have too many choices. As he states, “Choice is essential to autonomy, which is absolutely fundamental to well-being. Healthy people want and need to

direct their own lives. On the other hand, the fact that some choice is good doesn't necessarily mean that more choice is better." Maximizers have to settle for perfect even when good enough will do. As a result, maximizers experience a lot of regret, anxiety about missed opportunities, and engage in social comparison.

Schwartz suggests these 5 strategies to find your "good enough" (Schwartz, 2004).

1. **BE A SATISFICER.** This is Schwartz's word for "good enough." In order to know what is good enough to you, you have to have self-awareness. Importantly, "good enough" does not mean lowering your standards. It means being happy with what is and moving on.
2. **MAKE YOUR DECISIONS IRREVERSIBLE.** Interestingly, Schwartz has found that when you can change your mind about a decision you are often less satisfied with it. Have you ever shopped a clearance sale where the sale is "nonrefundable?" I have, and before I purchase something at one of these sales, I try on the item, look over every inch for dents, dings, wear and tear, and really think about whether it's something I want. Often times, it isn't. I don't usually go through the same methodical thought process for returnable items.
3. **MINIMIZE REGRET.** You can minimize regret by (a) adopting the standard of "good enough" (i.e., be a satisficer); (b) reduce the number of options you consider before making a decision; and (c) be grateful for the good decisions you make instead of focusing on disappointments.
4. **ANTICIPATE THE HEDONIC TREADMILL.** Human beings are bad at estimating how long something will make them happy. People adapt to their circumstances – it's hard wired in each of us – and it's called the hedonic treadmill. The hedonic treadmill works both ways, so when bad times hit, you'll likely bounce back quicker than you expect; and when happy events occur, those good feelings likely won't last as long as you think they will. So before you obsess over which pair of designer jeans to buy, know that the "my butt looks great in these" high will probably be short-lived.
5. **STOP SOCIAL COMPARISON.** When you tap into your own personal "good enough," you naturally start caring less about what's going on with other people. Focus on what makes you happy and what gives your own life meaning.

stay “plugged in”

Burnout is a disease of disengagement, so staying engaged and plugged into those things that give you energy and vitality is a natural inoculation against burnout.

Burnout researchers define engagement as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor (high levels of energy and mental resilience), dedication (being strongly involved and challenged by your work), and absorption (when you're working, you're in the zone and time passes quickly) (Bakker, Demerouti, & Sanz-Vergel, 2014). According to the research, engaged employees perform better on a daily basis, and the higher a person's level of engagement, the higher their objective financial returns (Bakker, 2011). In addition, levels of employee engagement are positively related to business performance in the areas of customer satisfaction and loyalty, profitability, and productivity; meaning, higher employee engagement translated into higher customer satisfaction and loyalty, higher profitability, and more productivity (Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002).

Two ways to stay engaged at work are to (1) outsource your inspiration and (2) change your job without leaving your job.

SKILL: OUTSOURCE YOUR INSPIRATION

I spent more than four years traveling around the world working with soldiers in the U.S. Army, teaching and training them in resilience and stress management skills. I was away from home for 12-14 days nearly every month, and many of my friends and family members wondered how I prevented burnout during that period of grueling travel. My answer was simple: at each training, I heard countless stories from soldiers letting me know how this training was benefiting them both personally and professionally. I *knew* that my work was having an impact.

Do you get enough contact with your “end user”? People work so hard, yet so often they never get to meet the people affected and impacted by their work. Companies need to place more emphasis on “end user” connection because the research in this area is nothing short of amazing. Here are some examples:

** Dr. Adam Grant and colleagues worked with call center employees at the University of Michigan. They had the fun task of cold calling alums to ask for money. One of the groups in his study actually got to meet a scholarship recipient and talk to him first hand. The scholarship recipient talked about how much the scholarship had changed his life, and he thanked the folks in the call center for their hard work. Once the call center workers realized how their work had an impact, they became motivated to work harder; in fact, their weekly revenue increased 400% (Grant et al., 2007)!

** When a patient's photo was included in the file received by radiologists, they wrote 29% longer reports and made 46% more accurate diagnoses (Turner, Hadas-Halperin, & Raveh, 2008)

** When nurses assembling surgical kits met the health-care practitioners who would use their kits, the nurses worked 64% more minutes and made 15% fewer errors than those nurses who did not meet the "end user" (Belle, 2013).

ASK YOURSELF:

Who is your "end user" and how can you connect with them more purposefully and frequently?

SKILL: CHANGE YOUR JOB WITHOUT LEAVING YOUR JOB

While burnout can be driven, in part, by workplace culture, it's not like many people can just up and leave their jobs. There is actually a pretty cool way to change your job without leaving your job: it's called job crafting.

Research shows that job crafting is predictive of work engagement, and to the extent employees proactively adjust their work environment, they can stay engaged and perform well (Bakker, Tims, & Derks, 2012). Job crafting involves actively changing the content or design of your job by choosing tasks, negotiating different job content, and assigning meaning to different components of your job (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001).

People are motivated to job craft because they want more meaning at work, more high quality-connections with others, more fulfillment, and more ability to cope with adversity (Berg, Dutton, & Wrzesniewski, 2008).

There are 3 strategies that you can use to help spark job crafting (Wrzesniewski, 2014):

1. **OPTIMIZE THE JOB YOU HAVE.** How can you shape the tasks you perform and the interactions you have at work to more fully express your values, strengths, and passions? Can you take on additional tasks that are more closely related to your passions?
2. **DEVELOP MORE HIGH-QUALITY CONNECTIONS.** Think about how you are connecting and interacting with your co-workers and colleagues. How could you foster more meaningful connections with those people (and maybe co-workers that you haven't interacted with before)?
3. **REORDER YOUR DAY.** What tasks are sources of energy and engagement for you each day? When do you do those tasks? Would you rather work on those most engaging tasks right away or at the end of your day? Change the order to match what works for you.

develop authenticity

Authenticity is simply showing up in life as you. It's hard for burnout to take hold and for you to become Addicted to Busy when you live and work from a place of authenticity.

I spent much of my law career being “Paula the lawyer;” meaning, I often left the best of who I was at home and acted how I thought a lawyer should act. As I tried to do everything perfectly, my authenticity faded away. A bunch of soldiers in the U.S. Army helped to change that. The resilience training I helped to deliver to soldiers required training team members to do two things that make me extremely uncomfortable: acting and dancing in public. The fact that I feel like Elaine from Seinfeld when I dance meant I got to look like a goofball in front of the toughest men and women on the planet. I also had to role play skills in front of students with another training team member. I almost gave myself a panic attack the first time I had to “perform,” and the weird looks I got from the soldiers reinforced the fact that it wasn't pretty. Then something amazing happened. The soldiers started to talk to me about times they got embarrassed and then we started talking about deeper issues. Authenticity requires vulnerability, which most people run away from. But here's the secret: Vulnerability feels like weakness but looks like courage to everyone else watching.

SKILL: STOP LISTENING TO THE CRITICS IN THE CHEAP SEATS

Leadership expert, John Maxwell, created the following framework for evaluating criticism:

- Who is the person giving the criticism? Do you view this person as a wise, trusted advisor?
- What is the spirit in which the criticism was given? Was the criticism coming from a place of kindness, or was it mean-spirited?
- What are the circumstances surrounding the delivery of the criticism? Was the deliverer of the criticism under stress or pressure, or going through a difficult time?

This framework, along with Brene Brown's message of “being in the arena,” has really helped me to evaluate criticism and stop taking it as a personal statement of my worth. The critics I listen to are “in the arena” too – they are taking risks and getting knocked around just like I am. I no longer pay attention to hurtful, anonymous comments come from people standing on the sidelines of life, or who are merely spectators in the “cheap seats.”

SKILL: ID THE HAPPINESS MYTHS YOU BUY INTO

I got engaged during my senior year of college, and I thought I had life all figured out. We would live happily ever with rainbows, white picket fences, and 2.3 kids. Fast forward a couple of years and he showed up at my apartment right before law school finals to tell me that he didn't want to get married. This was three months before our wedding. In that instant, my life totally changed. What I knew "for sure" was gone, and I went back to square one to reimagine a new life.

Here are 5 happiness myths that many people buy into (including me). These happiness myths interfere with your ability to step into the fullest version of your own story. Which myths resonate with you?

- I'll be happy when I get married or find that great relationship
- I'll be happy when I make more money
- I'll be happy when I have kids
- I'll be happy when I lose weight
- I'll be happy when I change jobs/get a new job/get promoted

Notice how lots of these happiness myths correlate with the shame triggers I mentioned in the "Let Go of Perfection" chapter? Happiness myths keep you from living the life you were meant to live.

In the aftermath of our breakup, I spent way too much time and energy trying to woo back my former fiancé, and I compromised my goals in the process. While we did rekindle our relationship for a few months it wasn't authentic. I even told him I would move to Northern Alaska and hang out in a small town and do nothing while he did some volunteer teaching for a few months!?! What was I thinking? I don't even like Wisconsin winters, let alone being isolated in cold weather somewhere thousands of miles from home.

Living an inauthentic life is a fast track to burnout, and if you're Addicted to Busy, you're not even paying attention to what authentic looks like for you. Inauthenticity also causes you to fill the "space" with other stuff – those unessential tasks I mentioned in the beginning of the e-book.

believe that you can produce results

A big dimension of burnout is inefficacy – feeling like you’re putting forth effort at work or in life but not seeing any results. Inefficacy drives feelings of “why bother” and hopelessness. In order to reverse or prevent feelings of inefficacy, you need to develop self-efficacy and cultivate hope.

Self-Efficacy...

Self-efficacy is just a fancy word for feeling like you can produce results in your life. Self-efficacy has been shown to be positively related to work engagement (Bakker, Demerouti, & Sanz-Vergel, 2014). In addition, a collection of more than 100 studies showed a strong positive correlation between self-efficacy and work-related performance.

Self-efficacious people have five distinguishing characteristics (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007):

1. They set high goals for themselves;
2. They welcome and thrive on challenge;
3. They are highly self-motivated;
4. They invest the necessary effort to accomplish their goals; and
5. When faced with obstacles, they persevere

SKILL: DEVELOP SELF-EFFICACY. Research points to three specific ways to build self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997):

1. **MASTERING TASKS AND EXPERIENCING SUCCESS.** Big successes are great, but self-efficacy is also built through experiencing frequent small successes. It’s important to put people in situations where the probability of success is high.
2. **OBSERVATIONAL EXPERIENCES.** Are you able to watch another person overcome challenges to achieve success at something?
3. **HEARING OTHERS URGE YOU ON.** This alone can be better for your performance than even monetary awards or other motivational techniques.

SELF-COACHING CORNER:

It’s time to start tracking your success. Keep a list of “wins” in order to build your mastery portfolio. Write down 2 or 3 things each day that you have done well.

Who is your self-efficacy role model(s)? Whose success can you observe?

It's important to hear other people supporting you along your path to success. Who is on your support team? How can you support others?

Hope...

Virtually all of the people I have interviewed or coached about their burnout experiences talk about feeling a sense of hopelessness with their situation. When you don't feel like you can change the outcome of your circumstances, it's hard to keep putting one foot in front of the other.

There is actually a science of hope, and high levels of hope have been linked to less absenteeism, more productivity, and greater health and happiness (Lopez, 2013). Here is an easy, research-based method for building hope.

SKILL: CULTIVATE HOPE

The three components of hope are (Snyder, 1994):

- (1) Having a realistic goal;
- (2) Crafting multiple pathways to achieving that goal, which includes identifying the obstacles that may occur;
- (3) Believing in yourself and believing that you can get there (this is agency or self-efficacy, which we talked about above).

Put the three hope elements into practice:

FIRST: Ask yourself what are you striving for? What's your goal?

SECOND: Where are you at right now? What does today look like? What is missing in terms of getting you from where you are today ("here") to where you want to be later on ("there")?

THIRD: What can you do about it? Where are your control/leverage/influence points? Who can help you? How?

start an addicted to busy discussion group

I'm planning to start a more formal discussion group on Facebook in the coming months, but I hope this e-book sparks both reflection and conversation about what it means to be Addicted to Busy. Here are some questions (for you or your group):

What are some of the things that drive your Addiction to Busy?

Where did those messages come from?

How can you influence the workplace to put measures in place that reduce burnout?

How can you start to work, live, and parent from a place of intentionality, authenticity and purpose?

Paula's biography

PAULA DAVIS-LAACK, JD, MAPP, is a former practicing lawyer, an internationally-published writer, and a stress and resilience expert who has taught and coached resiliency skills to thousands of professionals across the United States, Europe, Asia, and Australia. Her articles on stress, burnout prevention, resilience, and work/life balance are prominently featured on her blogs in *US News & World Report*, *The Huffington Post* and *Psychology Today*, and on Dr. Oz's website, Sharecare. Paula works with American Express as part of their Passion Project on Tumblr, and her expertise has been featured in and on *US News & World Report*, *Chatelaine* magazine (Canada's leading women's magazine), *SELF* magazine, *Women's Health* magazine, *Working Mother* magazine, *The Steve Harvey* TV show, *Huffington Post Live* and a variety of radio programs and podcasts.

She is the Founder and CEO of the Davis Laack Stress & Resilience Institute, a practice devoted to helping busy professionals prevent burnout, manage stress, and build resilience. Her website is www.pauladavislaack.com and you can email her at paula@pauladavislaack.com.

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